Lothian NHS Board

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Date: 13/03/2024
Your Ref:
Our Ref: 8421

Enquiries to : Richard Mutch
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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – POST-MORTEM PROCEDURES

I write in response to your request for information in relation to post-mortem procedures

Question:

- We kindly are requesting information on your institution's post-mortem procedures related to patients with cardiac devices. We have attached a short questionnaire in line with the above-mentioned objectives.

Answer:

Q1	How many patients pass through your morgue each year?	We have approximately ~3,500 patients per year in our care within body stores across all three acute sites (Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE), Western General Hospital (WGH) (Edinburgh) and St John's Hospital (SJH) in Livingston)
Q2	Approximately what proportion of these have a cardiac implantable device in situ? (PPM, ICD, ILR)	15 Patients within our sample of records. Due to the small numbers we cannot break this down by site – Section 38(1)(b)(d) of the Freedom of information (Scotland) Act 2002 – personal information The sample figures above are from Q2 (April – June) are taken from forms that accompany patients received into our care across all 3 sites from Jan 23 to Jan 24 as random samples of each month representing 25% of all deaths. This then would extrapolate to an annual figure of 60 patients with cardiac devices.
Q3	Does the hospital morgue also take deaths from the community, or is it for inpatients only?	No community deaths, inpatients only.
Q4	Is there a cardiac physiology	Yes

	department on site at your hospital?	
Q5	If a patient has a cardiac device in situ, is it routine practice for a device check to be undertaken after death?	Yes, at RIE and WGH but not at SJH.
Q6a	If yes, is the information regarding rhythm/therapies at the time of death routinely added to the patient's notes/hospital record?	In answer to Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8 – Cardiac Physiology perform every post-mortem device check that is requested (none are refused) but do not know the criteria that clinicians use to request one. We deactivate all ICDs that have not been done pre-death. We perform checks for Procurator Fiscal. All device checks that are performed post-mortem are documented on our electronic device database. Information is passed to clinical teams/procurator fiscal as appropriate.
Q6b	If yes, is the information regarding rhythm/therapies at the time of death routinely passed on to the clinical team?	
Q7	If no and this is not routine practice, are there ever exceptions to this, i.e., occasions where a post-death device check is requested by the clinical team?	
Q8	If yes, please elaborate (for example, how often or under what circumstances this occurs).	

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: https://org.nhslothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs
Cc: Chief Executive